

## Message Text

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73

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-11 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 /086 W

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R 211705Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4984

DIA WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION USUN NY

USCINCEUR

CINCUSNAVEUR

FOSIF ROTA

COMSIXTHFLT

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 0145

DIA FOR AH-8, DIR-3B2

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR MOPS MR SS

SUBJECT: SAHARA WATCH: SECURITY AND MILITARY SITUATION ON  
MAURITANIAN FRONT

1. NUMBER OF BITS AND PIECES CONCERNING SAHARA SITUATION CAME TO  
OUR ATTENTION DURING JANUARY 20 LUNCH HOSTED BY DAKAR-BASED DATT  
AT DCM RESIDENCE. LUNCH WAS ATTENDED BY MAURITANIAN ASSISTANT  
CHIEF OF STAFF FOR OPERATIONS, COMMANDANT MOUYA; DIRECTOR OF  
PRESIDENT'S CABINET FMF MILITARY AFFAIRS, CAPT. THIAM EL HADJ;  
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OPERATIONS OFFICER AT CHIOU OF STAFF HQ., CAPT. AMATH ATHIE;

AND SPANISH AND FRENCH MILITARY ATTACHES BASED IN NOUAKCHOTT.  
(CHIEF OF STAFF REGRETTED AT LAST MINUTE SO THAT HE  
COULD REVIEW SITUATION ON SPOT AT BIR MOGHREIN.)

2. MAURITANIAN OFFICERS REPORT THAT MILITARY SITUATION  
AT AIN BEN TILI, LOCATED ON MAURITANIA'S NORTHERN BORDER  
WITH SAHARA, AND BIR MOGHREIN REMAINS DIFFICULT.  
TOPOGRAPHY NEAR THESE LOCATIONS, PARTICULARLY SOUTH OF  
BIR MOGHREIN, FAVORS GUERRILLA ACTIVITY. MAURITANIAN  
OFFICERS DID NOT TRY TO HIDE FACT THAT PROBLEMS CONTINUE  
IN THIS AREA. IN FACT, THEY COMMENTED THAT TWO OF THEIR  
BEST-TRAINED OFFICERS, CAPT. SOUEDATT OULD OUEDATT AND  
CAPT. NIANG, WERE KILLED IN PAST SEVERAL DAYS IN THIS  
REGION. (GIRM OFFICERS DECLARED THAT THESE THE FIRST MAURITANIAN  
OFFICERS KILLED IN SAHARAN ACTION.) SOUEDATT WAS KILLED AT AIN  
BEN TILI AND NIANG AT BIR MOGHREIN. SOUEDATT WAS COMMAN-  
DING OFFICER OF NATIONAL GUARD UNTIL MARCH 1975 WHEN HE  
WAS TRANSFERRED TO NEMA AS DEPUTY GOVERNOR. HE RETURNED  
TO ACTIVE MILITARY SERVICE AT BEGINNING OF SAHARAN CAM-  
PAIGN. SOUEDATT HAS REPORTEDLY BEEN REPLACED BY CAPT.  
IBRAHIM.

3. SITUATION IN ATAR REMAINS STABLE, ALTHOUGH CAPT. ATHIE  
SAID ARMED FORCES PREFER TO MAINTAIN RADIO CONTACT WITH  
NOUAFCHOTT ETAT MAWCR WHEN TRAVELING BETWEEN AKJOUJT AND  
ATAR. WHEN PRESSED TO EXPLAIN NEED FOR THIS MEASURE,  
ATHIE EMPHASIZED IT IS ONLY PRECAUTIONARY STEP. HE ADDED, HOWEVER,  
THAT SAHARAN SITUATION HAS RESULTED IN MAURITANIANS  
FIGHTING MAURITANIANS, I.E., POLISARIO FORCES ARE COMPOSED  
OF MAURITANIANS. THEREFORE, POSSIBILITY EXISTS  
FOR TROUBLE ALMOST ANYWHERE IN NORTHERN TIER OF COUNTRY.

4. WHEN ASKED ABOUT SECURITY OF IRON ORE RAILROAD WHICH  
RUNS ALONG MAURITANIAN BORDER WITH SOUTHERN END OF  
SAHARA, IT WAS GENERALLY AGREED RAILWAY IS SECURE. OFFICIERS  
QUICKLY ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT "LARGE SECURITY FORCE"  
HAS BEEN PUT IN PLACE TO PROTECT RAIL LINK. NATIONAL  
GUARD TROOPS, IN PARTICULAR, ARE BEING USED FOR THIS  
PURPOSE.

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5. MAURITANIA OFFICERS EMPHASIZED CURRENT NEED FOR OB-  
SERVATION AIRCRAFT TO BE USED IN LOCATING GUERRILLA FOR-  
CES. TWO CESSNA 337S IN AIR FORCE INVENTORY ARE DEEMED  
INADEQUATE FOR TASK. IN ADDITION TO GIRM INTEREST IN  
BRITTEN-NORMAN AIRCRAFT CITED NOUAKCHOTT 0077, MAURITANIANS  
SAID AIR FORCE IS SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING PURCHASE OF FOUR  
CESSNAS.

6. GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED DAILY, CHAAB, OF JANUARY 21 REPORTS  
ARRIVAL PREVIOUS DAY IN NOUAKCHOTT OF ABDELLATIF GHISSASSI,  
MOROCCAN MINISTER OF COMMERCE, INDUSTRY, MINES, AND MERCHANT MARINE.

IN FRONT PAGE STORY, GHISSASSI IS PICTURED WITH OULD DADDAH, AND  
DESCRIBED AS SPECIAL ENVOY OF KING HASSAN. GHISSASSI REPORTEDLY  
CARRIED MESSAGE FROM HASSAN TO OULD DADDAH.HANDYSIDE

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## Message Attributes

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